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L3: Entry 1 of 1.

File: USPT

Jul 31, 2001

DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 6269343 B1

**** See image for Certificate of Correction ****

TITLE: On-line marketing system and method

Brief Summary Text (4):

The world Wide Web has provided a convenient mechanism for marketing products. Many web sites offer products for sale. Generally a potential customer viewing such a web site indicates a desire to buy a particular product by "clicking" on a particular location on the display screen. Some sites require a user to "register" by giving a name, address and credit card information. Later when a customer desires to buy a product the information entered during registration is used for billing and shipping. Other sites allow a customer to enter billing and shipping information after the customer has indicated a desire to purchase a particular product.

Detailed Description Text (45):

Next, if the time or date limit of the offers has not passed (block 32) the system displays the offer on one or more web sites (block 33). The display will have the elements of information shown in FIG. 2. A buyer who sees the offer on a web site can then indicate a desire to join the Buying Team for this offer by "clicking" button 28. At this point the buyer will provide billing and shipping information (unless it was previously provided during a registration process) and the buyer must indicate the amount of product desired (block 34). This is the individual buyer's "demand" level for this offer.

Detailed Description Text (53):

In a situation where offers are accepted (block 37) the buyers' credit cards are charged, the product is shipped to the buyers, and commissions are calculated and paid. If for example the system is being operated by one entity and the products are actually being sold by a different entity, the system operator may receive a pre-negotiated commission and the actual seller will receive the remainder of the selling price.

Detailed Description Text (62):

The system will present forms (block 64) to collect information from the potential buyer, presenting the forms either on the same web page where the offer was presented or on separate web pages linked to that first web page. The buyer enters the amount (e.g. the volume or number of units) they are interested in buying if this offer goes through (block 65). This is the potential buyer's individual "demand" level. For example, if the offer is for soccer balls, the user might indicate an interest in buying 5 balls. The potential buyer also provides his or her billing information (for example, credit card number and expiration date and billing address), shipping address, and contact information (block 66). Preferably an e-mail address is provided as part of the contact information. The potential buyer then gets a chance to confirm whether he or she really wants to join the Buying Group after all (block 67).

Detailed Description Text (70):

After determining the final price (block 72), each potential buyer is charged

(block 73) using the credit card information previously supplied by each buyer (block 66). Each buyer is charged the price times the number of units they are buying (as they indicated previously in block 65), plus any applicable tax and shipping & handling charge (if any). The system keeps track of which buyers were successfully charged. In some cases, credit card charges may not go through--for example, if a potential buyer's credit card has expired or is over its credit limit. In alternative embodiments, the system can automatically create invoices for buyers who prefer to be billed rather than paying by credit card.

Detailed Description Text (71):

The system notifies the seller that the offer has gone through, and provides the shipping and contact information for each successfully charged Buyer (block 74). The seller then ships the number of units requested by each successfully charged buyer (block 65) to that buyer. In alternative embodiments, the Seller could ship all of the units, in bulk, to a fulfillment company or to the System operator, who would handle shipping subsets of the units to individual Buyers.

Detailed Description Text (72):

In the case where the thing being purchased is a service, rather than a product, the seller would perform the purchased service for the buyer, rather than shipping any product.

Detailed Description Text (73):

Finally, successfully charged buyers are notified that the offer has been accepted, that they have been charged, and that the products are on their way (block 75). Potential buyers who were not successfully charged are notified (block 75) about the unsuccessful charge and no product is shipped to them.

Detailed Description Text (78):

If the parties are all distinct from one another, the System Operator 93b and each Media Generator Operator 94 will (in a preferred version of this embodiment) receive a commission or royalty on each sale facilitated through each Media Generator Operator's web site 95. Using the above example, ABC Corp. could create a Group Buy offer for a certain product, using a system like the one illustrated in FIG. 9 (operated by a potentially unrelated Operator 93b) to present those offers on multiple affiliate web sites including BBB Corp.'s web site and CCC Corp.'s web site. If enough demand is aggregated in time for that Group Buy offer to be accepted, then the System's Controller 93 will charge the buyers (including shipping and sales tax), pay BBB Corp. and CCC Corp. a commission based on the number of items sold through their respective web sites during this offer and the price of those items (or a fixed amount per item), retain another commission for the System's Operator 93b based on the total number of items sold through this offer and the price of those items (or a fixed amount per item), and pay the Seller 91 the remainder.

Detailed Description Text (95):

The products offered for sale using the various embodiments of the invention can be products that are offered for sale by the System Operator. Alternatively, the System Operator can merely provide facility that is used by others to offer products for sale. If it is the System Operator that is offering products for sale, when an offer is accepted, the System Operator (or an agent of the System Operator) will ship the product to the buyer. If the System Operator is merely providing a facility for others to offer products for sale, when an offer is accepted, the product will typically be shipped to the Buyer by the actual Seller (or by an agent for the Seller). In such a case the System Operator will only receive a commission for operating the system and the remainder of the purchase price will go to the actual Seller.

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Detailed Description Text (28):

In this example, the Demand Thresholds are 2, 6, and 21. The lowest Demand Threshold is 2, meaning that the offer will be cancelled unless at least two units are sold. The Maximum Demand Threshold is 21, meaning that the price will not drop any lower than \$4.00 in this offer. The price will drop to \$4.00 only when buyers order, in aggregate, at least 21 units during the buying cycle.

Detailed Description Text (57):

The seller starts by entering (or modifying) a description of the offer (block 44). For example, the seller might provide text (or a recorded voice) saying, "200 Brand A widgets for sale". Next the seller specifies a Maximum Demand Threshold and a corresponding price (block 45). For example, the seller might indicate that a particular widget will be sold for \$310 each if 200 can be sold during the offer. The seller can also specify additional lower Demand Thresholds and prices. For example, the seller could indicate that a particular widgets will be sold for \$325 each if the Aggregate Demand is 100 or more units but less than 200 units. That is, if potential buyers wind up expressing a desire to buy (in aggregate) between 100 and 199 units, the seller will sell those units for \$325 each, and if the potential buyers wind up expressing a desire to buy (in aggregate) 200 or more units, the seller will lower the per-unit price to \$310 each. Finally a seller has the option of also indicating a Maximum Available Amount of product available for sale during the offer. For example, if the seller only has 300 units in inventory, the seller could set the Maximum Available Amount level to 300.

Detailed Description Text (90):

In yet another embodiment, the system could allow buyers to express an interest that is conditional. That is, the system can allow a buyer to specify that the buyer will buy the product only if the demand is sufficient to lower the price to a particular level. In such an embodiment, the system would have a "buy button" as shown in FIG. 2 and one or more additional buttons that would allow a potential buyer to indicate that the order being placed is conditional upon the price reaching a particular level associated with the particular button.

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